



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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EARLY PREDICTIONS OF DUCK SCARCITY CONFIRMED

Predictions made prior to the opening of the 1946 migratory waterfowl hunting season that the duck flight would be short this fall are being confirmed by field reports on hunting conditions in the northern and intermediate zones, Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, said today.

These reports coming in from the Service's game management agents are based on their personal observations of local conditions, made either before or after the season, and substantiate early forecasts that ducks are scarce but hunters are plentiful.

Hunting began on October 5 in the northern zone which includes Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin. The season in the intermediate zone, which takes in Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming, opened on October 26.

That "ducks are decidedly conspicuous by their absence," according to the Service director, is the substance of the majority of the field reports with the exception of a few from spotted areas where hunting is still comparatively good.

In the New England area, for example, the duck flight is reported to be about 30 percent less than last year.

A brief resume of the reports by states gives the following facts:

Nebraska, October 12. "The duck and goose flight through eastern Nebraska has been very light to date and many hunters in this vicinity have remarked that it is the smallest flight they have ever seen."

New Jersey, Pleasantville, October 26. "Inspected about 35 hunters. Found but two with bag limit. Most hunters did not have a duck. Saw thousands of black duck and pintails near Salem, N. J., and ruddy ducks at Chester Island in the Delaware River. The opening day brought out thousands of hunters." Toms River, October 26. "Checked 71 hunters, few ducks killed."

Missouri, October 13. "Made a thorough survey of the Lake of the Ozarks by boat and found 11 ruddies, 7 mallards, and between 500 and 600 coots in the area." October 22. "During our check of Wappapelo Reservoir we saw 20 Canada geese, 5 snow geese, 25 mallards and about 100 wood ducks. Prior to this in the Big Lake area and the Horse Shoe Lake area in Illinois the same was true." October 28. "Ducks are decidedly conspicuous by their absence in all the areas where I have worked. Made a patrol on October 27 in the shooting areas along the Mississippi River between Canton, Mo., and Keokuk, Iowa, which is normally a heavy pressure area. Only saw 250 mallards and 50 wood ducks. No geese were seen or heard. Gunning pressure was heavy but we checked less than a dozen dead ducks throughout the day. Most observers say that this condition is by far the worst in their memory."

Minnesota, St. Paul, October 5. "A very poor opening." October 12, Hennepin and Scott counties, "Very few ducks observed." Early fears expressed by hunters in the northern zone that the blue-winged teal flight would be lost to them because of the October 5 opening date were upset by a report from Arthur S. Hawkins, flyway biologist for the Service, which stated that "blue-wings led all other species by a wide margin in the Detroit Lakes area for the first two days. Within a week, however, most blue-wings that survived the opening barrage had departed. Redheads

ranked second in the bag at Detroit Lakes and third at Fergus Falls. A flight of canvas-backs on October 11 resulted in a heavy kill of this species on the weekend that followed."

Michigan, Bay City, October 6. "Ducks mostly gone." October 12, "Very poor hunting except for sneak boats."

North Dakota, October 19. "Hunting has been just fair the past week. Very few hunters got their limits of either ducks or geese."

Kansas, Kanapolis Reservoir, October 22. "About 300 geese and 3,000 ducks here." Little Salt Marsh, October 26. "Lots of hunters out, a good many full bags of ducks and geese checked."

Delaware, Newport Marshes, October 26. "Season opened with 'bluebird' weather and very, very few ducks. Examined 61 hunters who had a total bag of 8 ducks."

Illinois, October 26. "Very few birds were observed during our patrol activities along the Mississippi River on the opening day. Checked 17 hunters along the river bottoms and in all found just 6 mallards. Very few wood ducks were found south of Quincy but we did find a number north of there in the large back waters. Returned to the Illinois River bottoms on October 27 and found very few birds taken by hunters. Most of the wood ducks have left the Havana and Beartown districts."

Iowa. "The 1946 waterfowl season opened in Harrison and Wright counties with weather clear and warm. A very large number of hunters on Big Wahl, Elm and Eagle lakes brought to bag a very small number of wild ducks. There were too many hunters on the lakes and too much out-of-range shooting. Checked in 10 boatloads of hunters and found only 9 ducks among the lot of 20 hunters. Big Wahl Lake had approximately 350 hunters, Elm Lake about 275, and Eagle Lake around 300--far too many hunters for the lakes area hunted over."

Wisconsin, Oshkosh, October 20. "Noted increase in canvasback ducks."

Utah, Ogden, October 26. "Estimated 2,000 hunters in this area today with very good bags."

Washington, Yakima, October 13. "Large concentration of ducks near Union Gap." Skagit Flats, October 5. "Mallards and pintails common."

Wisconsin, Eldorado Marsh, October 13. "Not many ducks." West shore of Lake Winnebago, "A very good increase in mallards and bluebills." Butte des Morts, "Several flocks of Canada geese, flight of cans, plenty of widgeon and bluebills. Shooting poor, mild weather." October 6, vicinity of Brooks, "Lots of hunters and very few ducks."

South Dakota, October 19, "Goose hunting good in Sand Lake area, 20,000 geese there, duck hunting fair." October 5, Webster, S. D., "Hunters out in large numbers and hunting excellent."

Michigan, Fish Point near Bay City, October 20, "Few ducks and none being killed." October 22, Pennsville, "Only 300 geese in area." October 25, Unionville, "Ducks very scarce."

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